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ABSTRACT

The study is a continuation of previous research into the nature and magnitude of the delinquency problem among Wind River Indian Reservation youths in Wyoming. The study is based on responses to a self-report questionnaire concerning delinquent acts, alcohol use and drug use which was administered to 9-12 grade students in high schools in the Wind River Indian Reservation area (May 1972). Findings were based on a sample that included 355 Anglo males, 315 Anglo females, 68 Indian males and 62 Indian females. There was little overall difference in the self-reported delinquent activities of Indian and Anglo males, with the exception that Indians were more involved in offenses centering around the school. Data did indicate, however, that compared to the Anglo female, the Indian female was considerably more involved in running away from home and in school centered offenses. Also, although there was an indication of a slightly greater drug use by Indians, the study did not indicate that illegal drinking is more of a problem among Indians than Anglos. The Indian youths in this study were disproportionately concentrated in the lower class and were somewhat underrepresented in the middle class. Thus, it is possible that some or all of the differences that have been found between Indian and Anglo delinquency may be due to differential social class distribution. This hypothesis was analyzed by sex, race, and social class. (PF)

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# A SELF-REPORT COMPARISON OF INDIAN AND ANGLO DELINQUENCY IN WYOMING

Morris A. Forslund, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology
The University of Wyoming

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What little is known about American Indian delinquency is based largely on conclusions drawn from studies utilizing official data. Available studies indicate that American Indian youth have a relatively high official delinquency rate involving predominantly minor offenses and alcohol related offenses (Forslund and Meyers, 1974; Minnis, 1972; Reasons, 1972; Riffenburgh, 1964; Stewart, 1964).

The present study is a continuation of previous research into the nature and magnitude of the delinquency problem among Wind River Indian Reservation youth in Wyoming. It was motivated by two principal concerns. First, a large proportion of offenses committed by both juveniles and adults are never reported or officially recorded. Therefore, they do not appear in the records of any official agency (Quinney, 1970: 108-23). In addition, only about one in five offenses known to the police nationally is cleared through arrest (FBI, 1972: 104); and, it is only when an offense is cleared through arrest that the characteristics of the alleged offender are known. Furthermore, those offenses which are recorded in official records, and those which are cleared through arrest, reflect not only the incidence of criminal or delinquent behavior in a population but also the manner in which the law is administered (Quinney, 1970: 121). Therefore, it is probable that numerous offenses committed by both Indian and non-Indian youth are never officially recorded, or if recorded are never cleared through arrest so that the race of the alleged offender

becomes known. It is also possible that differential implementation of the law occurs with respect to Indian and non-Indian youth; (Minnis, 1972); and if this is the case it will affect the relative magnitudes of their official delinquency rates.

Second, little information is available concerning the relative rates and types of delinquency involvement among Indian and non-Indian youth living in the same geographical area.

Although self-report delinquency studies have both advantages and disadvantages (Nettler, 1974: 73-97), they do obviate the above-mentioned difficulties associated with studies based on official data and thus provide information not available from official sources. The present study is based on responses to a self-report type questionnaire concerning delinquent acts, alcohol use and drug use which was administered to ninth through twelfth grade students at two high schools in the Wind River Indian Reservation area in May of 1972. The findings are based on a sample that includes 355 Anglo males, 315 Anglo females, 68 Indian males and 62 Indian females.*

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*Questionnaires were also completed by 47 other students. Four students did not answer the question concerning race and have therefore been eliminated from the tabulations and analysis. In addition, 31 Mexican-American students, two Black students, two Oriental students and eight "other" students have not been included in the tabulations and analysis. Thus the data analysis focuses on a comparison of the delinquency of minority group Indian youth with that of dominant group Anglo youth.

## FINDINGS

The self-report questionnaire contained items concerning a variety of types of delinquent acts. The behavior analyzed here ranges from acts which constitute felonies under Wyoming law to those which are so minor that they are unlikely to result in an adjudication of delinquency unless engaged in repeatedly or as a part of a pattern of more seriously delinquent behavior.

Table 1 presents the proportion of Anglo and Indian males and females who indicated that they had committed each of the various types of acts "during the past year."* There is a significant difference between Anglo and Indian males for seven of the twenty-nine offenses and between Anglo and Indian females for 16 of the twenty-nine offenses.**

A significantly higher proportion of Anglo than Indian males had made anoymous telephone calls and had drunk an alcoholic beverage when a parent or guardian was not present. A significantly higher proportion of Indian than Anglo males had been truant, skipped school, took things from desks or lockers at school, beat up someone and used drugs other than marijuana for kicks or pleasure. Truancy, here, refers to an unexcused absence from school for an entire school day while skipped school refers to coming to school but leaving without an excuse at some time during the day.

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*The year preceeding the administration of the questionnaire in early May of 1972.

**Significance determined through the difference of proportions test.

Among females, in every case in which there is a significant difference a higher proportion of Indians than Anglos indicated having committed the offense during the past year. These offenses are: truancy, skipped school, signed someone else's name to a school excuse, ran away from home, let air out of tires, broke windows, broke down clotheslines, etc., put paint on something where it didn't belong, took things from desks or lockers at school, took things worth under $2, took things worth between $2 and $50, took things worth over $50, drove a car without a license or permit, fought, beatup someone, and smoked marijuana.

Tables 2 and 3 present these same offenses by race, sex and frequency of commission during the past year. For males, the only difference between these findings and those presented in Table 1 is that when frequency of commission of the act is considered these is no significant difference between Indians and Anglos in the use of drugs other than marijuana.* For females, there are the following differences between the findings of Tables 1 and 3: when frequency of commission of the act is considered there is no significant difference between Indians and Anglos for driving a car without a license or permit; however, in addition to the differences reported above, Indian females indicated that they more frequently disobeyed teachers or other school officials, drank while parents or guardians were not present and broke street lights.

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*Significance determined through the use of Chi Square.

## SOCIAL CLASS AND DELINQUENCY

For several years there has been considerable controversy with regard to the relationship between social class and delinquency (Reiss and Rhodes, 1961; Clark and Wenninger, 1962; Empey and Lubeck, 1971.) A number of writers have, however, suggested a variety of reasons for expecting an inverse relationship between social class and delinquency (Miller, 1958; Glaser, 1971; Shaw, 1930; Merton, 1968; Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Casper, 1972). The Indian youth included in this study are disproportionately concentrated in the lower class, are somewhat underrepresented in the working class, and are distinctly underrepresented in the middle class.* Thus, it is possible that some or all of the differences that have been found between Indian and Anglo delinquency involvement may be due to their differential social class distribution. To test this hypothesis the twenty-nine offenses were analyzed by sex, race and social class. Because of the small number of cases in many cells, the analysis could not be carried out in terms of frequency of commission of the offenses. Thus, the findings reported below are based only on the percentage of individuals in each sex-race-social

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*Social class was determined through the use of August B. Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position. New Haven: 1957. In the analysis Classes I, II and III were combined as "middle class" because of the small number of persons in Classes I and II. Class IV was designated working class, and Class V lower class.

class category who indicated that they had committed the given offenses at least once during the past year. Significance was determined through the difference of proportions test. Only those differences which have a probability of less than .05 of being due to chance are reported, and detailed tables have been omitted because of space considerations. It should be noted, however, that with only two exceptions the directions of all significant relationships indicated in Table 1 hold within all three social class levels. The two exceptions are found in the middle-class; whereas for the total sample it was found that a higher proportion of Anglo than Indian males drank in the absence of parents or guardians and a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo females skipped school, in the middle-class the situation is reversed. A higher proportion of Indian than Anglo males drank in the absence of parents or guardians and a higher proportion of Anglo than Indian females skipped school. But neither difference is significant.

Middle-Class Males

A significant difference between Indian and Anglo males was found for only two of the items--took a car without the owner's permission and used drugs other than marijuana. In both cases a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo males indicated having committed the act during the past year.

Middle-Class Females

A significant difference between Indian and Anglo females was found for nine of the items. A significantly higher proportion of Anglo than Indian females defied parents to their face, while a higher proportion of Indian females were involved in truancy, letting air out of tires, breaking down clotheslines, etc., breaking street lights, taking things worth under $2, beating up someone and using drugs other than marijuana.

Working-Class Males

A significant difference between Indian and Anglo working-class males was found for only three of the items--truancy, took things from desks or lockers at school and drove a car while intoxicated. In each case a higher proportion of Indian than anglo males indicated having committed the offense during the past year.

Working-Class Females

A significant difference between Indian and Anglo working-class females was found for three of the items--took things from desks or lockers at school, beat up someone and drank when parents or guardians were absent. In each case a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo females indicated having committed the offense during the past year.

Lower-Class Males

Only one significant difference was found between Indian and Anglo lower-class males--skipped school--and this offense

was committed by a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo males.

Lower-Class Females

A significant difference between Indian and Anglo lower-class females was found for ten of the items--skipped school, disobeyed a teacher or school official, signed someone else's name to a school excuse, ran away from home, marked on desks, etc., broke down clotheslines, etc., put paint on something where it didn't belong, took things from desks or lockers at school, drove a car without a license or permit and fought. In each case a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo females indicated having committed the offense during the past year.

From the above analysis it is clear that when social class is controlled there is a considerable reduction in the number of offenses for which there are significant differences between the two races. Nevertheless, of the differences that remain all but one are in the direction of a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo youth committing the offense. And, while there are few differences between Indian and Anglo males of any social class level or Indian and Anglo working-class females, both middle-class and lower-class Indian females appear to be considerably more delinquent than their Anglo counterparts.

It should also be noted that in the analysis controlling for social class several significant differences were found

which did not appear in Table 1: a higher proportion of middle-class Anglo females defied parents to their face; a higher proportion of middle-class Indian males took a car without the owner's permission; a higher proportion of middle-class Indian females broke street lights and used drugs other than marijuana; a higher proportion of working-class Indian males drove a car while intoxicated; a higher proportion of working-class Indian females drank in the absence of a parent or guardian; and a higher proportion of lower-class Indian females disobeyed a teacher or other school official and marked on desks, etc.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As detailed above, there is little overall difference in the self-reported delinquent activities of Indian and Anglo males--with the notable exception that Indian males are more involved than Anglo males in offenses centering around the school. On the other hand, the data indicate that compared to the Anglo female the Indian female is considerably more involved in running away from home and in a variety of other offenses centering primarily around the school, theft, vandalism and assault. Contrary to what might have been expected on the basis of previous studies that relied on official records, the findings of this study did not indicate that illegal drinking is much more of a problem among Indian than Anglo youth. There is, however, an indication of a slightly greater use of drugs by Indian youth.

Other data collected in this study also point to difficulties between Indian youth and the school. Compared to Anglo youth, a significantly higher proportion of both male and female youth have doubts about whether or not they will complete high school, do not plan to attend college, feel that they are not as smart as their peers, receive lower grades in school, and have dropped out of school at least once. Furthermore, Indian males are less involved than Anglo males in extracurricular activities; and, a higher proportion of Indian than Anglo females consider their classes to be dull and boring. These findings, in addition to those previously presented, leave little doubt that there are problems in the relationship between many Indian youth and the school. Other studies have found that the beginnings of a delinquent career are often first noticeable in the relationship between the child and the school (Burns and Stern, 1967). The implication is, perhaps, that if preventive measures can be taken to reduce or eliminate problems between youth--and here, particularly Indian youth--and the schools, the development of serious delinquency involvement may be forestalled.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this study has focused on differences rather than similarities in the delinquent activities of Indian and Anglo youth. Examination of the data indicates that a high proportion of both Anglo and Indian youth of both sexes have engaged in a variety of delinquent acts. Although the majority of the offenses are relatively

minor, many youth have committed what are generally considered to be serious offenses.

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Table 1

Percentage of Indian and Anglo Youth Who Indicated That They Had Committed Various Delinquent Acts During the Past Year, by Sex

| Delinquent Act | Percent Committing Various Delinquent Acts | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | | Female | | |
| | Anglo | Indian | P | Anglo | Indian | P |
| Truancy | 42.1 | 62.1 | .003 | 32.4 | 52.5 | .003 |
| Skipped School | 49.9 | 67.7 | .008 | 46.5 | 61.3 | .033 |
| Disobeyed teacher, school official | 69.1 | 70.1 | | 61.7 | 74.2 | |
| Signed name to school excuse | 16.5 | 24.2 | | 21.0 | 42.6 | .001 |
| Disobeyed parents | 90.9 | 88.1 | | 94.0 | 95.2 | |
| Defied parents to their face | 43.1 | 36.4 | | 47.8 | 38.3 | |
| Ran away from home | 10.2 | 18.2 | | 13.3 | 29.5 | .002 |
| Said mean things to get even | 81.1 | 79.1 | | 87.3 | 93.5 | |
| Made anonymous telephone calls | 36.4 | 16.4 | .001 | 41.5 | 33.9 | |
| Trespassed | 76.9 | 77.3 | | 76.5 | 83.9 | |
| Let air out of tires | 35.8 | 41.8 | | 17.1 | 29.0 | .029 |
| Marked on desk, wall, etc. | 78.2 | 75.8 | | 82.3 | 90.3 | |
| Thrown eggs, garbage, etc. | 45.2 | 34.8 | | 17.1 | 25.8 | |
| Broke windows | 32.4 | 33.3 | | 6.3 | 17.7 | .003 |
| Broke down clotheslines, etc. | 24.1 | 30.3 | | 10.5 | 27.4 | .001 |
| Put paint on something | 28.9 | 25.4 | | 18.4 | 35.5 | .003 |
| Broke street light | 26.6 | 23.9 | | 5.7 | 9.7 | |
| Took things from desks, etc. at school | 22.8 | 37.9 | .010 | 7.6 | 26.2 | .001 |
| Took things worth under $2 | 44.4 | 50.0 | | 31.6 | 49.2 | .008 |
| Took things worth $2 to $50 | 16.0 | 18.2 | | 9.6 | 19.7 | .022 |
| Took things worth over $50 | 5.1 | 9.1 | | 1.3 | 6.6 | .009 |
| Took car without owner's permission | 13.6 | 15.2 | | 10.5 | 16.4 | |
| Drove car without license | 64.6 | 71.2 | | 55.4 | 70.5 | .001 |
| Fought — hit or wrestled | 66.6 | 71.2 | | 41.5 | 67.7 | .001 |
| Beat up someone | 41.9 | 63.6 | .001 | 13.6 | 46.8 | .001 |
| Drank, parents absent | 80.8 | 69.1 | .030 | 73.6 | 82.3 | |
| Drove car while intoxicated | 37.7 | 41.2 | | 18.7 | 29.0 | |
| Smoked marijuana | 18.3 | 23.5 | | 14.0 | 27.4 | .009 |
| Used other drugs | 6.0 | 14.7 | .012 | 10.8 | 11.3 | |

Table 2

Frequency of Commission of Various Delinquent Acts During Past Year by Anglo and Indian Males

| Delinquent Act | Anglo | | | Indian | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % Never | % 1-2 | % 3+ | % Never | % 1-2 | % 3+ | P< |
| Truancy | 57.9 | 25.1 | 16.9 | 37.9 | 21.2 | 40.9 | .001 |
| Skipped school | 50.1 | 23.2 | 26.6 | 32.3 | 21.5 | 46.2 | .01 |
| Disobeyed teacher, school official | 30.9 | 35.7 | 33.4 | 29.9 | 34.3 | 35.8 | |
| Signed name to school excuse | 83.5 | 11.1 | 5.4 | 75.8 | 10.6 | 13.6 | .05 |
| Disobeyed parents | 9.1 | 29.9 | 61.0 | 11.9 | 32.8 | 55.2 | |
| Defied parents to their face | 56.9 | 26.1 | 17.0 | 63.6 | 27.3 | 9.1 | |
| Ran away from home | 89.8 | 8.2 | 2.0 | 81.8 | 15.2 | 3.0 | |
| Said mean things to get even | 18.9 | 32.2 | 48.9 | 20.9 | 40.3 | 38.8 | |
| Made anonymous telephone calls | 63.6 | 15.0 | 21.5 | 83.6 | 9.0 | 7.5 | .01 |
| Trespassed | 23.1 | 19.1 | 57.8 | 22.7 | 15.2 | 62.1 | |
| Let air out of tires | 64.2 | 21.9 | 13.9 | 58.2 | 25.4 | 16.4 | |
| Marked on desk, wall, etc. | 21.8 | 29.9 | 48.3 | 24.2 | 33.3 | 42.4 | |
| Thrown eggs, garbage, etc. | 54.8 | 19.2 | 26.0 | 65.2 | 18.2 | 16.7 | |
| Broke windows | 67.6 | 22.4 | 9.9 | 66.7 | 24.2 | 9.1 | |
| Broke down clotheslines, etc. | 75.9 | 18.4 | 5.7 | 69.7 | 19.7 | 10.6 | |
| Put paint on something | 71.1 | 19.8 | 9.1 | 74.6 | 16.4 | 9.0 | |
| Broke street light | 73.4 | 16.1 | 10.5 | 76.1 | 17.9 | 6.0 | |
| Taken things from desks, etc. at school | 55.6 | 25.4 | 19.1 | 50.0 | 34.8 | 15.2 | |
| Taken things worth under $2 | 77.2 | 15.1 | 7.7 | 62.1 | 22.7 | 15.2 | .05 |
| Taken things worth $2 to $50 | 84.0 | 10.3 | 5.7 | 81.8 | 15.2 | 3.0 | |
| Taken things worth over $50 | 94.9 | 3.1 | 2.0 | 90.9 | 6.1 | 3.0 | |
| Taken car without owner's permission | 86.4 | 9.7 | 4.0 | 84.8 | 13.6 | 1.5 | |
| Drove car without license | 35.4 | 25.4 | 39.1 | 28.8 | 22.7 | 48.5 | |
| Fought -- hit or wrestled | 33.4 | 26.9 | 39.7 | 28.8 | 33.3 | 37.9 | |
| Beat up someone | 58.1 | 23.2 | 18.7 | 36.4 | 34.8 | 28.8 | .01 |
| Drank, parents absent | 19.2 | 15.2 | 65.6 | 30.9 | 11.8 | 57.4 | |
| Drove car while intoxicated | 62.3 | 12.1 | 25.6 | 58.8 | 19.1 | 22.1 | |
| Smoked marijuana | 81.7 | 8.5 | 9.9 | 76.5 | 11.8 | 11.8 | |
| Used other drugs | 94.0 | 2.3 | 3.7 | 85.3 | 8.8 | 5.9 | .02 |

Table 3

Frequency of Commission of Various Delinquent Acts During Past Year by Anglo and Indian Females

| Delinquent Act | Anglo | | | Indian | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % Never | % 1-2 | % 3+ | % Never | % 1-2 | % 3+ | P< |
| Truancy | 67.6 | 25.4 | 7.0 | 47.5 | 27.5 | 24.6 | .001 |
| Skipped school | 53.5 | 26.0 | 20.5 | 38.7 | 27.4 | 33.9 | .05 |
| Disobeyed teacher, school official | 38.3 | 39.2 | 22.5 | 25.8 | 37.1 | 37.1 | .05 |
| Signed name to school excuse | 79.0 | 15.0 | 6.1 | 57.4 | 31.1 | 11.5 | .01 |
| Disobeyed parents | 6.0 | 26.6 | 67.4 | 4.8 | 32.3 | 62.9 | |
| Defied parents to their face | 52.2 | 29.7 | 18.0 | 61.7 | 26.7 | 11.7 | |
| Ran away from home | 86.7 | 12.1 | 1.3 | 70.5 | 14.3 | 14.8 | .001 |
| Said mean things to get even | 12.7 | 42.1 | 45.3 | 6.5 | 38.7 | 54.8 | |
| Made anonymous telephone calls | 58.5 | 19.0 | 22.5 | 66.1 | 17.7 | 16.1 | |
| Trespassed | 23.5 | 33.0 | 43.5 | 16.1 | 32.3 | 51.6 | |
| Let air out of tires | 82.9 | 12.7 | 4.4 | 71.0 | 17.7 | 11.3 | .05 |
| Marked on desk, wall, etc. | 17.7 | 36.1 | 46.2 | 9.7 | 45.2 | 45.2 | |
| Thrown eggs, garbage, etc. | 82.9 | 8.5 | 8.5 | 74.2 | 17.7 | 8.1 | |
| Broke windows | 93.7 | 5.4 | 0.9 | 82.3 | 16.1 | 1.6 | .01 |
| Broke down clotheslines, etc. | 89.5 | 9.2 | 1.3 | 72.6 | 17.7 | 9.7 | .01 |
| Put paint on something | 81.6 | 15.8 | 2.5 | 64.5 | 29.0 | 6.5 | .01 |
| Broke street light | 94.3 | 4.7 | 0.9 | 90.3 | 3.2 | 6.5 | .02 |
| Taken things from desks, etc. at school | 92.4 | 6.0 | 1.6 | 73.8 | 21.3 | 4.9 | .001 |
| Taken things worth under $2 | 68.4 | 20.8 | 10.9 | 50.8 | 26.2 | 23.0 | .02 |
| Taken things worth $2 to $50 | 90.4 | 7.3 | 2.2 | 80.3 | 9.8 | 9.8 | .01 |
| Taken things worth over $50 | 98.7 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 93.4 | 4.9 | 1.6 | .05 |
| Taken car without owner's permission | 89.5 | 7.9 | 2.5 | 83.6 | 14.8 | 1.6 | |
| Drove car without license | 44.6 | 19.6 | 35.9 | 29.5 | 27.9 | 42.6 | |
| Fought -- hit or wrestled | 58.5 | 21.2 | 20.3 | 32.3 | 45.2 | 22.6 | .001 |
| Beat up someone | 86.4 | 8.2 | 5.4 | 53.2 | 32.3 | 14.5 | .001 |
| Drank, parents absent | 26.4 | 16.8 | 56.8 | 17.7 | 8.1 | 74.2 | .05 |
| Drove car while intoxicated | 81.3 | 11.4 | 7.3 | 71.0 | 19.4 | 9.7 | |
| Smoked marijuana | 86.0 | 5.4 | 8.6 | 72.6 | 21.0 | 6.5 | .001 |
| Used other drugs | 89.2 | 5.1 | 5.7 | 88.7 | 3.2 | 8.1 | |